

The Art of Archaeology

The 1839 invention of photography was revolutionary, and instantly useful to archaeologists, changing the nature of documenting the past. Yet reproducing color in photographs remained a technological and costly challenge, and before color photography was developed by Kodak in the 1930s, the Penn Museum hired artists to draw materials for publication and exhibition. *Year of Color: Art in the Archives* renews our appreciation for color illustrations, lithographs, early black and white photography, and monochromatic images retouched in color.

The Museum Archives hosts this special exhibition that explores the

concept and value of color imagery, the spectrum of techniques used, and the artistry of Museum illustrators to convey the textures, dimensions, and inscriptions of objects in the Museum's collection. Among the more than 40 images on display are detailed watercolor paintings of Maya pottery and the Sumerian bull-headed lyre by M. Louise Baker, Museum Artist from 1908 to 1936. Also featured are a stunning portrait of Slow Bull by Edward S. Curtis, an illustrated translation of the famous Rosetta Stone published by the University of Pennsylvania's Philomathean Society in 1856, and a color lithograph of Czar Nicholas II of Russia, a souvenir of his coronation in 1896.

—Alessandro Pezzati, Senior Archivist



Tunjung girl's necklace of glass beads. Mahakam River, Kalimantan, Borneo, 1896–1897 (UPM object #P17). Drawing by unknown artist, ca. 1900. Gift of Alfred C. Harrison, Jr. UPM image #238716.



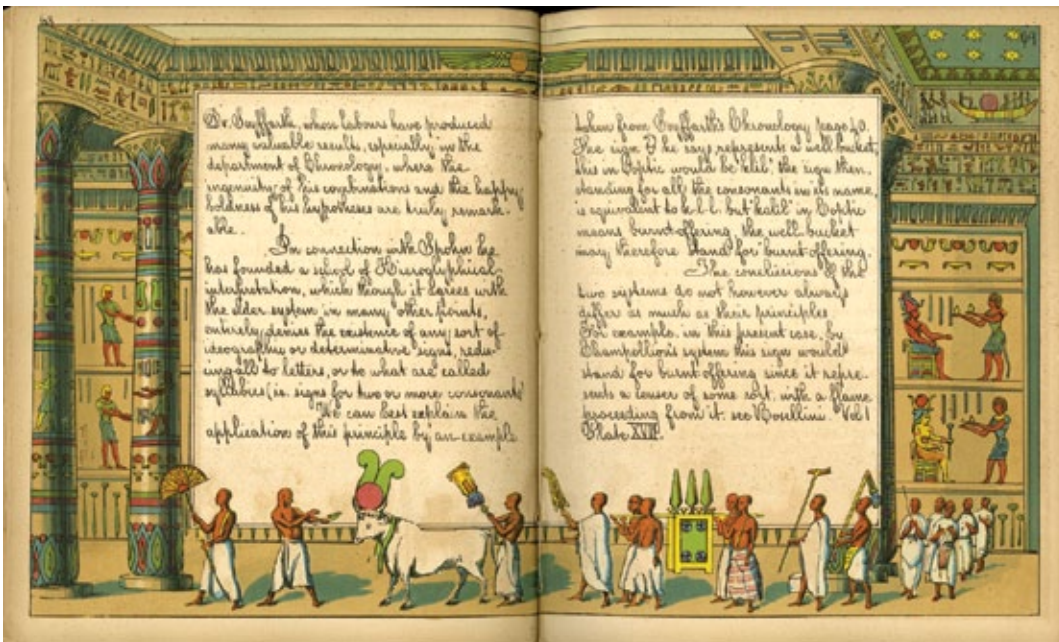
LEFT: Ceramic goblet with leopard motif excavated at Tepe Hissar, Iran. Watercolor by Ivan Gerasimoff, 1932. This painting stands out for its background of brilliant color. Most archaeological illustrators, in contrast, ignore the background. UPM image #169927. RIGHT: Two Japanese women. Hand-colored albumen print, ca. 1870s–1880s. Photograph by Felice Beato or Reteniz von Stillfried. Furness, Harrison, Hiller Collection. Throughout the late 1800s, various methods were used to create color photographs from black-and-white images. A number of studios employed artists to paint them. This was especially popular in Japan. UPM image #152499.



M. LOUISE BAKER
(1872–1962, PICTURED
ca. 1930), the talent
behind a number
of the paintings in
the exhibition, was
Museum Artist for
almost 30 years.
She began working
for George Byron
Gordon, then Assistant
Curator of General
Ethnology and later
Museum Director, who
commissioned her to
create color depictions
of the most beautiful
specimens of Maya
pottery for a portfolio
published by the Penn
Museum. Her drawings
and paintings are so
vivid and realistic, they
tempt the viewer to
pull the artifact from
the page.



BELOW, LEFT: Sumerian bull-headed lyre from Ur, Iraq ca. 2650–2550 BCE (UPM object #B17694). Watercolor by M. Louise Baker, ca. 1930. UPM image #171548. BELOW, RIGHT: Polychrome ceramic Maya vase from Quiché, Guatemala, ca. 600–900 CE (UPM object #12696). Watercolor by M. Louise Baker, 1910. UPM image #165048.



Translation of the
Rosetta Stone
inscription by the
Philomathean
Society, University
of Pennsylvania.
Book with color
lithographs. In 1856,
three undergraduates
from Penn's literary
society undertook to
translate, illustrate, and
publish the translation
of all three portions of
the famous Rosetta
Stone (the Egyptian
hieroglyphics had been
deciphered by Jean-
François Champollion
in 1822). Every page
is uniquely illustrated
and handwritten. UPM
image #238718.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Alex Pezzati, Senior Archivist, and Joani Etskovitz, Summer Intern, co-curated this exhibition, on view in the Penn Humanities Forum and founded Penn Museum Archives corridor, 2nd floor, through May 31, 2015.